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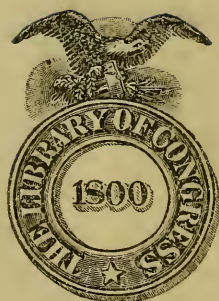
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1917

*The Valley
of the Grand*



By Ernest Leaverton



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Book E. 158 I 4

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IN THE VALLEY OF
THE GRAND



Cordially Yours
Ernest Laverton

IN THE VALLEY OF THE GRAND

BY

ERNEST LEAVERTON

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*Dedicated
to
The Homemakers in the Grand Valley.*

Before me lay the keyboard of
Nature: Touch it where I would it re-
sponded with a melodious harmony of
Love.

I pass this little volume on to you,
dear reader, trusting that it may afford
you a pleasant hour of reflection and
enjoyment.

Grand Junction, Colorado.
October, 1917.

IN THE VALLEY OF THE GRAND

The waning moonlight proclaimed the birth of a perfect day. The sky was of azure clearness. Rays of saffron from Eastern horizon betokened a glorious sunrise. Presently from o'er Grand Mesa—that magnificent array of rock and pine—proud Phoebus raised his head. Another day was born. Another life to live!

The charming days of Fall had come;
The trees were full of hanging fruit.
Son! You and I to-day will chum,
And unto Nature give salute.

We'll walk—we want no motor's help;
To-day we'll be healthy and free;
Our lungs we'll give a chance to yelp;
Our bodies we'll girdle with glee!

Son and I were soon off. We carried no guns or fishing tackle—who would

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want to spoil the pleasure of a living creature on a day like this? We went forth to enjoy encumbered not, save by thin sandwich and cookie in side pocket. A day before us. Kings! Living in the Valley of the Grand!

The Valley of the Grand!

How sweet thy name:

How great thy name—

Thou Valley of the Grand!

We hit off toward the sugar factory—the shortest cut to the river. I have often thought of what a wonderful thing sugar is—Concentrated Nectar of the Gods! Incorruptible, like a sweetheart true; Pure as the morning dew. And we make it here; right under one's nose, and we consider it commonplace. As we approached the factory, I brought myself to attention, and looking into the face of old Mr. Factory, I tipped my hat and bowing said: "Old Mister Sugar Man, I'm glad to see yuh! May

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ye live long and prosper.” Some waving beet tops in the nearby field caught my eye, and I tossed them a kiss, as I came up to the tail end of my salute. And then realizing that they were back of all of this, I sang them a little song as we passed by:

My Sugar Beet!

My Sugar Beet!

What bee carried honey to you?

Who gave you the power

To sit by the hour,

And fill up your heart

With such a sweet tart?

Cupid must have been shooting at you!

“Off agin—gone agin, Dad!” commented Son.

“Heavens! Boy,” said I, “You have busted my rhyming-machine and now my bobbin is gone.”

“I should worry,” consoled Son, looking as rosy and happy as a baked apple swimming amid sugar and cream.

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'Erelong we reached the river—the Grand. Looking between two young trees of cottonwood, we watched the swift stream eddy and half turn and leap forward, ever on in endless glides and spurts. Walking a little farther up the bank we came to a small bayou where a slight part of the bosom-stream came in to play a while with its green friends along the border. Round the bend beyond came the sound of crash and splash—it was the waters playing leapfrog o'er the rocks. Coming to the bend, we stood enthralled. Here lay before us a long sweep of the Father of the Valley! If his mighty soul could but speak, he would tell us of how he came to be:

How rock formation fought for breath;
And air and water saved from death
This once fiery ball of hell.

Now abounds on every land
Evidence of the Unseen Hand.

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Many long years was it to be
Before I could run to the sea.

Through mountain and valley and
plain

I rumbled and tumbled to gain
This freedom so precious to me.

But out of my labor and strife
I gave to this valley the breath of
Life!

How true it is that people must first settle and develop the great river-basins of the world, in order to furnish stamina to the less favored spots. Go back, if you please, in the misty ages of the past and study the history of the growth of the great river-basins of the olden times: The Nile, the Tigris and Euphrates, and the Yang-tse-Kiang. Later the hordes came to the Danube; scaled the Alps and drifted up the Rhine. On and on they pressed until our own Atlantic shore bid them welcome, and up

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the rivers of its coast they went. Before long they sailed down the Ohio and into the Mississippi. Finally they crossed the Great Divide; and here we are, friend—in the Valley of the Grand. Where we have barely touched these rich ovens of earth and these pockets of mineral and oil. What a heritage to enjoy and to pass on to future generations!

Flow on, O Grand!

Natured and planned
By Divine Grace!

Charming thy face;
Useful thy form—
All, You adorn!

We tramped on through willow-garden and sand-drift. The great river had sifted out huge banks of yellow and white sand, which lay glistening in the bright sunlight. Son wrote his name in the sand, while I threw flat lit-

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tle rocks on the face of the stream. They hummed and skipped from dip to dip and finally went to their last sleep in the bed of the river. A hawk floated lazily overhead; some magpies chattered and flirted in the nearby trees. Strolling idly along, we came opposite the old fording-place. My mind turned back to the pioneer: Where is he who first ventured to ride his steed into the vitals of this swift, death-sucking monster's maw? Braver heart than I possess must he have who would attempt to conquer this turbulent stream. Perhaps his spirit was hovering near—reading my feeble attempts to give him due admiration and praise:

O! That I had words to tell

Of this first Knight who rode so well;
Who marked the way to moving band,

So they could ford the River Grand.

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No monument may grace your resting
place,
And of your flesh and bone there is no
trace;
But now You, our Hero, from Home
above
Can see the fruits of your pioneer
Love!

Peace and Rest, to you!

We now turned off into a path that
led into the orchards. Fruit hung
temptingly within reach.

"May I have a pear, Dad?" inquired
Son.

"Yes, here's some on the ground, but
don't touch the fruit on the trees."
Somehow I felt that we were welcome to
fruit on the ground, without asking for
it. This belief was further reinforced
by the fact that there were numerous
ducks and ducklings helping themselves
to it.

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Quack! Quack! Smack! Smack! Muck!
Muck!

Full of duck song
They waddled along;
Eating their fill.
From orchard till.

Why man!—they were there like a
duck!

Who doesn't enjoy watching a duck? They may not be so handy on dry land with their side-wheelers; but oh that bill—how it dives and darts! That neck with its fifty-seven varieties of glides, twists and turns. Yes, a duck must get a lot of pleasure out of life. At least, I never heard of them being bothered with fleas nor "sich" like. About the only thing that "gets" a duck, after he's safe and sound out of his shell, is—*Homo*. No joshing, did you ever hear of a duck dying a natural death?

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When we reached the house, we asked the lady for a drink. "Certainly, all you want, in the cistern-house."

We had expected to have to drink cistern water. Not so—it was mountain water, from Grand Mesa. "Oh! And so you have mountain water?"

"Yes, we get the same water as you do in town."

"That's great!" I complimented.

"Don't let the ducks in, please," as she turned toward the house.

Son and I took turns in drinking and shooing ducks. Having taken on our capacity we departed, feeling that so far the Gods had been exceedingly good to us; but our good luck was still on the upward trend—we had much more treasure-trove ahead waiting discovery.

What charm in hidden things;

What joy their finding brings!

What peace in looking around—

In sky, water and ground!

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We came very nearly stumbling over a brick house in the next orchard. It set well back from the road hidden by some massive cottonwoods. It was not a small house, for it was two stories with ample girth; yet it appeared so on account of the trees. How cool and inviting it looked! How substantial and everlasting!

"Some house!" remarked Son.

"I would guess yes," I returned.

A man and woman were packing pears in a shed. "Come in!" said the man, in a soft quiet voice.

"Oh Dad!" exclaimed son, pointing toward some plums and prunes hanging in profusion nearby.

"Wouldn't that make your mouth water? Help yourself, Sonny," spoke up the woman, "there's plenty of them."

"I should like to buy a few," I said.

"Oh shucks! We wouldn't think of selling them," she responded. "Would you like a pear?"

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"No, thank you, but I'll sure eat a prune or two."

We stood in the shed-doorway and watched them pack. How deftly the woman's fingers entwined paper around the pears; and how proud and handsome the pears were, to receive such good care and to be laid down gently, just so. Once in a while there would be a cull tossed over into the cull-box. I felt sorry for them, until the woman told me that they would go to a poor family in town, and be eaten by a lot of little tots. Then I thought that they were after all the luckiest of the lot, for they would be appreciated the most.

"You are getting good prices, are you not?"

"Oh, yes, fine!" joyously proclaimed the man. "We will make at least a thousand dollars off of our pears this year and we have not quite an acre and a half. My brother, back East, won't believe it. He's coming out this

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fall. Said he was coming just on purpose to find out how much of a liar I am about my returns. By the time he comes I'll have them from the Association to show him. If he comes I am a-thinking there'll be another family move out here in the spring."

"Well, Son, haven't you filled up yet on those plums and prunes?"

"Let him eat all he wants—they won't hurt him," encouragingly offered the woman.

"Gee, Dad! Wasn't you a kid once?" ejaculated Son.

"Yep, I reckon; but let's be going. Thank you for the fruit."

"Don't mention it," was the parting chorus of the contented packers.

The next place stood clean and preen—like a pure-blooded animal. It seemed to say: "Come on—you're as welcome as ripe tomatoes in January. I'm always ready for company, be it back gate or front." We came through the back

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gate—one of those little lover's kind that swings noiselessly and gracefully, with a handy latch. Where is there a youth or maiden who has not made love over a gate. Why ask such an obvious question: I shall deny the question mark. Let's take a look at ourselves over the gate, as we once were, as we now are, as we will be:

Lovers at the front gate:

Who cares if hour is late;

With love gently swaying

There's no harm in staying.

Both busy taking stock—

“Marie! It's twelve o'clock!”

“O hang it!” says Marie—

“Look out! Bobbie, she'll see!”

“I didn't say you could have so many;

“Naughty boy! Next time you'll
get not any.”

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"Marie! Come this minute!"

"Gee, kid, I'm in for it.

"Maw's getting awful mad—

"She's most anything but glad.

"Bobbie, let loose my arm."

"One more won't do no harm."

"Oh well! Take it and go

"Gee whiz! But you ain't slow!"

As I have already said—we came through the gate—and there they were—what? Why the loveliest patch of onions one ever shed tears over. From love to onions—but such is life! Six or seven acres of onions, and not a weed in sight! Their white bodies gleamed in the sunlight; showing only, of course, a modest glimpse of tender blossom. Each green plumage nodded a hearty onion greeting; then stood quietly and proudly to attention as we gave them fond and tender looks. I wanted to get versy at once and sing them a little onion song. But alas! The only thing

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I could rhyme with onion was bunion, and that wouldn't do. As I struggled with the problem, Son suddenly exclaimed: "Cracky! Dad, wouldn't you like to own that patch?"

"Son! If I owned that patch of onions I'd be the proudest gentleman in Mesa County. I'd go right up town and run a private bus-line out there and back. I'd show 'em what I could do, by jinks!"

"How much do you s'pose a fellow'd get for them, Dad?"

"I don't know, Son, but I remember that I had to pay fifteen cents a pound last Spring for a mess or two."

"How many do you reckon there is here?"

"Now look'a here, Son, I don't know any more about that than you do—suppose you count them. If you are good at figures you ought to get them 'the once over' by Christmas. Maybe we'll

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run on to somebody around here who can furnish us with some onion-statistics."

We came on toward the barn. Everything was as neat and nifty as young Mr. Neat and Miss Nifty could be. Stalks of green corn lay in an even pile on a hayrack; all farm implements were under cover; two fat cows stood contentedly chewing their cuds; a dapple-gray mare stuck her head over the fence at us; her colt was lazily taking lunch; several cords of wood, cut into stove-wood lengths, were piled in compact rows between large cottonwood trees. "There, Son, I want you to take notice of that wood-pile. Isn't it a pippin? It makes me feel right at home."

Some folk have made their pile. The only kind of a pile I have made is a wood-pile. Yes, I live in town, but I've got a wood-pile. Creating a wood-pile is an excellent way to eradicate guile and gall. I must confess that I am self-

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ish, for now and then travelers come along and look at my wood-pile, and notice the un-piled part of it, and—go on. Other travelers offer to work out a meal. But I tell them that that wood-pile is my very own and I don't propose to divide that pleasure with anyone. I am willing to let them have a meal, but not at the expense of using my wood-pile. I love my wood-pile. I have yet to find a more useful and health-giving implement than is the ax. This ancient tool of man has created more wealth, health and happiness than has any other instrument ever invented by him. Every true nature's nobleman loves his ax. He delights in the harmony of its voice and its handsome clean-cut face. It is a charming companion.:

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Some aspire to office and affairs of
state;

But give me a wood-pile near the
barnyard gate.

Some like to ride around in buzz-carts
so grand;

But I like to swing my ax to beat the
band.

Some have got rheumatics and others
have the gout;

But I've got an appetite and feeling
stout.

Some are getting old and bent and
round-chested;

And always feeling tired and never
are rested.

If all you guys that's sick and sort o'
disgusted;

And thinking hard to keep from
going busted—

Would get an ax and chop some wood
You'll be doing yourselves a lot of good!
(And others too).

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On the back lawn were several lines of clothes!

When I see the Stars and Stripes floating from lofty staff, it makes me want to take off my hat and salute The Colors. But when I see Milady's clothes-line full of the usual Monday wash—and it so pretty and white, waving and flapping in the wind—not only do I want to take off my hat to her and to it, but I want to kneel in the presence of both and offer up a prayer that I live in a country that can boast of more clothes-line per capita than any other country on the face of God's green earth. And if there are baby clothes on the line, in my mind's fancy, I can see little angels with happy faces sitting around on the grass and on the fence looking at the little garments!

"What are you dreaming about, Dad?"

"I was thinking, Son, what a lovely place that is for turtle-doves to spoon

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in," pointing to a dove-box on top of the barn. Several of the doves were preening and cooing on the shingles. Symbols of purity, gentleness and peace, they seemed to bless the quiet barn-yard. They flitted among the animals. While we were watching them one lit on the broad back of the dapple-gray. She stood perfectly still while the dove favored her with a visit:

What confidence and love

Doth animals display,

Where man is kind and true.

Soul, when sick and tried,

Retreat to quiet barn-yard—

Owned by some gentle friend—

And watch its sweet life.

Rainbows of hope arise;

Disappointments depart,

And peace captures the heart!

As we came around in front of the house, a man addressed us: "Hello, there! What are you doing out here?"

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"Why, Guy! Is this where you live? But I might have known that you lived here—just from the thrills and joys that I have received during the past half an hour. Here I have known you for a good many years and have never been on your place before. I have lost a great deal by acting so unwisely."

"Tut, tut, man," he replied modestly, "You are spreading it on too thick."

"Say, Guy! What a glorious field of onions you have. What can you possibly do with all the money they will bring you?"

"I've got a place for it—I am going to build a barn. That old barn has been an eyesore to me for a long time."

"That old barn looks pretty good to me."

"That may be, but I'm going to have a better one."

"What do you expect to get for those onions?"

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"Oh, I ought to get at least three hundred dollars an acre. How would you fellows like to have some watermelon?"

"Would we like to have some watermelon, Son? Would we!" Loud and long came the answer—"You betcha!"

"Come on," said Guy. He took us across the road.

"My! What potatoes!" I ejaculated.

"Let me show 'em up," and Guy scraped off a little loose, sweet earth with his hand. There they lay—uniform in size—not quite as large as a croquet-ball, and slightly flattened. They were of a perfect mild red-rose tint. He cut one open, and oh, such a white heart! I have seen red potatoes before, but none so lovely as were these. And so many say that they can't raise potatoes in the Valley. What magnificent proof did my eyes behold. Never again will I be imposed upon by any disgruntled potato knocker. I proclaim it: More perfect potatoes

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never grew eyes than were those that winked at me from their soft bed in Guy's field.

The next thing we came to was some sweet potatoes; their delicate vines covered the earth in thick profusion.

"Well, Guy, I suppose that these sweet potatoes are right on the job, too?" With a shovel he deftly turned out a bunch of them. They hung in a cluster, about the size of a milk-bucket—five large ones from six to eight inches long and a number of smaller ones:

Sweet potato! Sweet potato!

What magic did cause you to grow,
Yellow and fragrant and tender,
In riotous free-hearted splendor?

Oh yam! Oh yam! Delicious yam!

Savoriest tuber what am—
When you are on the bill of fare,
Just let me know and I'll be there!

"There is just the right mess for your dinner to-morrow," said Guy. (Guy must have heard my prayer.)

"Guy, There is nothing that I can think of this minute that I would rather have than baked sweet potatoes."

"Well then, I'll eat your share of the watermelon," commented Son.

"Now, Son!" I remonstrated, "it is not fair to throw a clutch in so tight as that. I love my sweet potato—but oh, you watermelon!"

"Follow me," said Guy. We were soon surrounded and captured, body and soul, by a field-artillery of watermelons. They pointed at us from every angle. Guy charged here and there among them, thumping as he hopped. "Thump, thump!" he softly whacked them, until he found one extra large of girth that thumped true to his trained sense of a ripe and mellow heart within.

"Here is one!" he proclaimed. We wheeled and charged, with open mouth.

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Guy drew his large jack-knife. Following the incision came the sound of cracking rind—one of those cracks that cracks itself. All it needed was a little encouragement. I wish I could write that sound down on paper, but it is a mystical, soothing, unwriteable thing for me—one of those goodies that I cannot reduce to ink.

Eating watermelon, right off the vine
on a cool fall day; All you want, man!
Think of it! I've just got to rhyme:

Refreshing sweet watery juice,
As ever a plug would turn loose.
Bright red-faced, mellow-hearted pulp,
Ecstasy at every gulp!

Watermelon! Watermelon!

Some airy light little fairy
Must have taken a pail of dew;
Some sunshine and pearls and laughter of girls,
And chunk of rainbow, then blending
just so—

Behold! Watermelon, that's you!

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Having loaded up to our ears on watermelon, and only half of it being consumed, we cached the remainder, along with our bunch of sweet potatoes, in a newly mowed alfalfa-cock in an adjoining field. "We'll be back this afternoon, Guy."

"I'll be expecting you" he replied.

We ambled off through the alfalfa-field, where the sweet aroma of the hay, blending itself with the air and the gentle breeze, concocted cocktails of delightful nose-whiffings. I thought of how pleasant it would be if it could be canned. Perhaps some day somebody will invent a machine that will compress and capture this charming odor from out of the air, and we can have it on our tables the year round. Then one could have various kinds of compressed odors—keeping them on the table in one of those oldfashioned whirl-a-gigs, like mother used to have to keep the salt,

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pepper, vinegar and pepper-sauce in.
Remember?

I have often thought of alfalfa as being Nature's most precious gift to the arid West:

Thou tall slender clover-like desert
herb,
With violet and purple bloom superb;
Prolific growth and everlasting youth;
With grace usefulness and nothing
uncouth—
We of the West welcome you—Alfalfa!
When God was busy working out a plan,
That this great West might be useful
to man,
He made you immune from the heat and
cold;
And now you are far more precious
than gold—
Yes, we of the West love you—Alfalfa!

Leaving the hay-field behind we entered a field of corn. Old King Corn is

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a reliable old soul—filling up the mush-bowl and all sorts of useful stunts. He's on the job most everywhere in the States. He is certainly at home in the Valley of the Grand. Quite a few local folk used to tell me that one couldn't raise corn here—that the nights were too cold; but they don't talk that way nowadays. I was born near a corn-field. so I was told, and so I feel perfectly at home in one. I don't have to ask any one how many bushels of corn in a field will make per acre. I may not know much about onions, but when it comes to corn, I'll take a peg in the deal. I'll make a "sashay" around through the corn, and then I'm ready to give my opinion: "Well, boys, she'll run anywhere from eighty to eighty-five bushels per acre."

This particular corn-field in which Son and I were gallivanting through, was some corn, and then some—would miss ninety bushels to the acre by only

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an ear or two. There is no better corn country on the face of God's green sod than right here in the Valley. "Yep, they done said yar nights she been too cold. Wall what o' that—Tis all the better by hinkey, fer the korn she sleeps o' nights, and then how she does git up and hump through the day—kause she's fresh and full o' dew and feelin' fine, thankey. If the nights war hot, she'd git all het up and git cranky and tired o' growin'. We done got sich a crackin' good kuntry that we don't need hot nights—things ken spread round fast o' nuff from sunup ter sundown. Now, ain't I got yer comin', goin' and sideways on the korn hatchin'?"

I felt more at home than ever when I ran across some cockle-burs in the corn, for I have a distinct recollection of how it was my job to go through the corn, after it had been laid by, and hoe out the burs. They are fine for making play-baskets, but somehow they are not high-

ly relished as a food by man or beast. In fact I have never discovered what they were really made for, unless it was to give boys something to do between times. I couldn't resist grabbing a grasshopper and making him angry by running a straw up and down his ribs, until he tried to spit on me. I also wondered why there were no chinch-bugs in the corn. They sure used to hang around the corn a right smart back in Kansas, when I was a boy. Perhaps our Chamber of Commerce has sent them no invitation to come over the range, or else maybe they began to raise so much stuff for them to eat in Kansas that they all died of the colic. Anyway they have never seen fit to call on us.

After loitering along through the corn we finally ran plump bang into a patch of tomatoes. There was a youth picking them: "Hello, sonny! How are they turning out this year?"

"Most too many fer pickin'."

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"How many ton are you getting to the acre?"

"Don't ax me—I ain't been pickin' that long."

"My! But those are big, smooth fellows."

"Yars, but they ain't as big as they beed back in Indeeannie."

"Oh! I don't know about that, I've been around some in Tippecanoe County and I have never seen anything that would lay a candle to these."

"Mustin ter ben down in the Southern part then—they hafter git extru sized cans fer ter can 'em down yar."

"You must be thinking about pumpkins."

"Punkins! Say, feller! You oter seed the punk my pap tuck the prize with down ter our kuntry fair. It was so blasted big me and me big brother cud sleep in 'er nights, and we keeped one cow on 'er all winter."

"Who owns this place?"

"Wall, I caint just say now—I jess come on this job this mornin', and I think maybe I'll quit'er ter-night—too many tomaters ter suit me."

"How many bushel-baskets are you getting on the row?"

"Caint say, I ain't a bin trackin' 'em."

"Oh! come on, Dad!" ejaculated Son.

I couldn't blame that boy much for being discouraged, if he had to pick all of those tomatoes by himself—but I would pity the tomatoes more (and the owner as well) if he did. I must confess that I saw more ripe tomatoes than I had ever seen in one spot before. The vines were kept off of the ground by strong wire-netting that had been put in place while the plants were small. This kept the tomatoes off of the ground and also gave the sun a better chance to get at them. A tomato in its perfect state is a gem. Its body is so delicately curved and its green stem so artistically woven and its coloring so

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gorgeous. Really, to me, it is one of Nature's best handiwork in the vegetable kingdom.

"Let's hit her off for the river and eat our lunch in the shade," suggested Son.

"All right, I'm willing, for it will take me at least an hour making notes on what I got out of that boy about tomatoes."

"Well, Dad, that boy wasn't hired to answer questions, was he?"

"Oh! I haven't any kick coming so far as that part of it was concerned—he answered me every time I spoke to him."

"Yes, but he didn't say anything."

"Oh, well, Son, that's nothing uncommon—plenty of people do that."

We lunched in the shade of the cotton woods and watched and listened to the river. There has always been something fascinating to me in watching water in motion. We know that it has been the reason for a great many ideals and

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mythologies and fantasies of man from time immemorial. One of those old Greek philosophers, full of love or prunes, as the case might be, would sit for hours (nowadays he would go a-fishing) and muse until he had a whole circle of muses and a basket full of sprites. Sometimes he would get caught in the rain, and then he would image a thunder god or two, and when the slow moss-covered brook had become a raging torrent, he would mix his thunder and blixen and turn out a batch of devils. And then when the storm had passed and the sun had dried his clothes, he would forget the evil spirits and think that this was a pretty good world after all.

After munching our snack and taking a short snooze, we ambled off into the outskirts of the peach-belt. Think man! The average yield per acre of a good peach orchard in the Valley of the Grand is fifteen hundred boxes. Compute it at seventy-five cents per box,

and there you are—going some, eh? Of course, I don't want to be understood as meaning that we get a crop every year. Let me be conservative and have a crop every other year, and allow me to reduce the average price to fifty cents—yes, even forty cents, per box, and then, my friend, we are still making more money off of a ten-acre peach orchard than one would off of a quarter-section of land in the Mississippi Valley.

Yes, we have our troubles, too, just the same as one has troubles in other places. There are a lot of folk who think that it is a snap to grow peaches. Nix on the snap. Fruit-growing is the highest and hardest kind of an art, but it pays the true artist well. The general average farmer has to learn the art, and any art is a zealous mistress—demanding all of one's time and attention, and especially is this true in horticulture. A peach tree is like an infant—somebody has to nurse and feed it the proper food, etc.

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We found that most of the peaches
had been picked, but we discovered one
here and there—enough to eat. They
had ripened on the trees and were very
delicious. Take a large Elberta or a
Crawford, and size it up:

O! Miss Peach! Surely thou art fem-
inine,

Or no such creamy tint would be
thine—

Thou Valley of the Grand's Valentine!

No more beauty and grace is found
anywhere;

No fruit more deserving of loving
care.

Thy form doth my heart and soul en-
snare!

Gathering the fragrance of the morn's
dew;

Your covenants with the sunbeams
renew—

Why! The Angels in Heaven would wel-
come you!

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"Well, Son, we had better be turning face about," and we struck off through the country homeward bound.

"Remember that half melon, Dad."

"Don't accuse me of forgetting that, Son. We'll sidle back that way after a while."

"Hello, there!"

"Hello, yourself! Why, is that you George. You haven't moved down here, have you?"

"No, I live in the same place—I've got this place rented for a pasture."

"Have you gone out of the truck business?"

"Mostly. I like stock-raising better. What do you think of this colt, ain't he a beaut? Refused two fifty for the mare and colt. Got a couple of two-year olds in the back pasture. Come on over and see 'em."

"And so you have decided to go in for stock?"

"Yes, I like it better than farming."

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"It's wonderful how horses have come back, George. One would think with all kinds of motors that horses would be a drug on the market. Of course the war has helped a lot."

"Yes, that's true, but there are a-plenty of farmers, myself included, that's found out that it pays better to have horses rather than motors: horses are cheaper than gasoline now, and then, too, it's a lot better for the soil."

"My, man! But you have some fine calves there."

"Yes, I've got seven of them—they're all from good stock. I want to show you some pigs that is pigs when we get back to the house. Got ten pigs that will be ready for market in December—corn fed—they are good for at least three hundred dollars."

"George, thirty years ago hogs were selling for three cents a pound, and now they are fifteen cents up—some difference. In those days if a farmer would

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invest a thousand dollars in a pleasure vehicle, he would have been voted as ready for the bug house; nowadays the farmer who doesn't motor is a curiosity. By George! George, that is certainly a peach of a pair of two-year olds, and how well they match, what are they worth?"

"Well, I'll get at least four fifty, maybe five hundred for 'em. I've got some cheap land up on the Pinon where I am going to summer my stock next year, and in a few years I'll be in the stock business right."

"George, this has been a crackin' good year for everybody around here, hasn't it?"

"Yes, I'm satisfied."

George turned the mare and colt into the pasture and we walked back to his house with him.

"Want some cantaloupes?" inquired George. "I've only got a few—feeding them to the pigs mostly."

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"Why don't you ship some?"

"I haven't time to monkey with them."
We came to the patch, about one-half acre—several hundred melons were coming on in all stages of development.

"Better come up to the house and get some salt."

"No thanks, Son carries salt—he uses an old talcum can and it shoots fine. We would rather have a can of salt than a gun any day." Son and I ate two muskmelons apiece. "Well, so long George."

"Come out again."

"We will."

"Dad, when I grow up I want to be a farmer," said Son.

"All right, Son, I believe that you have a good hunch. I'll try to get together enough coin to send you to some good agricultural college."

"It don't take much money, does it?"

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"Not if you work your way through, it don't. Where there is a will there is always a way—as the old saying goes."

In about an hour of steady plodding we reached the cache and found our melon still cool. Seeing Guy out in the field, we carried our melon over to where he was working, so that we could talk and eat together.

"Well, Guy! I see you are still at it."

"Yes, I just received an order from the hotel in town to bring in fifty pounds of sweet potatoes, and while they are not quite ready to dig, they are bringing me good money—twelve and a half cents a pound—and so I can afford to nip them now. I'll be through by the time you get your melon eaten and then I want to show you my house."

"You like to ranch, don't you, Guy?"

"Yes, I do. I would rather run this little place than anything else I know of. I've tried other things, but I am back on the land to stay."

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What joy in doing things
That one likes best;
What pleasure labor brings—
Contentment, rest.

Happy he who finds out
His own life's work;
No longer does he doubt—
Nothing to shirk.

Achievement surely his
Reward and crown;
Victory certain is—
Great his renown!

I placed my mess of sweet potatoes in a small flour sack, which I had brought along for just such an emergency, and Son and I went with Guy to see his house. It nestled back among the trees, comfortable and cozy. "What a unique looking cement porch and how substantial. Did you build it?"

"Yes," said Guy; "also the walks."

On the inside we found a beautiful hardwood floor. Built into the walls

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were bookcases, desk, china closet and window-seats. He had electric lights, mountain water from town, hot and cold water, and of course bath, etc., in fact, every city convenience. In the bookcases were some of the world's best literature.

"I see you have Dickens—he is my favorite author."

"I like him, too," replied Guy. He continued: "I like to read something that I can get some good out of—not necessarily heavy stuff, but something about life and told in a human sort of way. Nowadays, it seems to me, that the publishers are spending most of their time trying to get the people to buy something that they don't want."

"Guy, you are exactly right, the publishers are trying to force the public to read a fake brand of literature. Blood and thunder and mystery and sex ad nauseam isn't life. Life's activities are better than this brand of fiction and

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a whole lot more entertaining and wholesome." We spent a very enjoyable hour together. When I reluctantly started to leave, I discovered that Son was being entertained by Guy's sister, with popcorn balls for the principal menu. She insisted that I also partake of one, which I did without much urging.

Hear the pop, pop, popping.

As though there would be no stopping
Of the popping popcorn!

How it jostles and jumps,

Takes the leap and gets up and
humps:

Jolly is popping corn!

In the long winter's night,

How it makes things cozy and right
When one's eating popcorn!

"Looks like rain," I said as we started
for home.

"Yes," replied Guy. "It's raining a
little on Grand Mesa now. Come out
again."

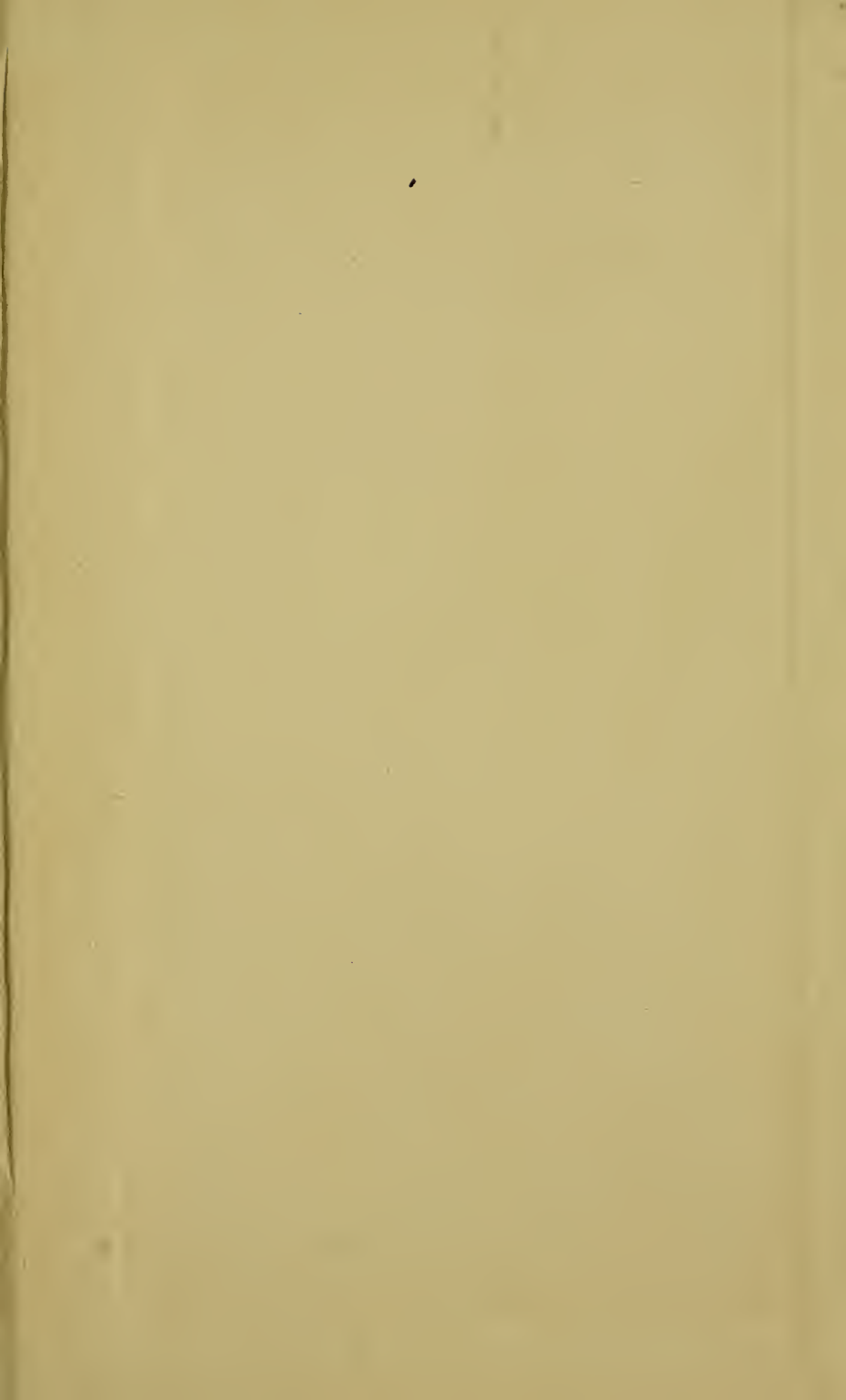
“We sure will.”

The sun was rapidly approaching his journey's end on this part of the earth. He threw out his arch of light, which shadowed the sides of Pinon Mesa with a soft, misty green. Farther on, near Grand Mesa, it became a vapor of shadowy blue. Presently, a primary rainbow came like a caressing baby angel and nestled in eastern sky. 'Ere-long a secondary bow appeared. Marching forth, parallel to western horizon and apparently to capture the rainbows, came bands of colors in red, orange, yellow, green and blue, with a heavy reserve of purplish glow over all. Shadows and soft lights patted and kissed the cheeks of the Book Cliffs, and lingered in fond embrace around the neck of Mount Garfield; then came on to court Mount Lincoln.

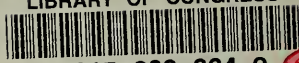
Slowly, but surely, the outline of Grand Mesa came through the sea of blue vapor, faint at first—like a spirit—

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then bolder, and finally, the Soul of the Proud Old Mountain came forth in all of it's majestic glory. Floating clouds of fluffy white and pearl and pearl-blue and pearl-gray, flitted here and there, as though carrying angels from Heaven to witness this gorgeous array of light and color. Gradually the soft shadows and tints of blue dispersed for the time being, and suddenly from crag to crag, from gorge to gorge, from mountain to mountain there appeared one vast sublime color of golden beauty! It tinted and hallowed every living creature and the growing garments of the earth. It even appeared to make the dead in tree and weed come forth and breathe a soft beauty of life. It was wonderful! Wonderful beyond the conception of thought! No pen could write it; no voice could speak it; no brush could paint it—it was the touch of a master hand. My heart filled and thrilled with gratitude. Everything proclaimed: Glory to God in the Highest; Peace on Earth—Good Will to Men!



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